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THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE NAME YGGDRASIL.

In his *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse*,¹ Christiania, 1881-89, pp. 291-528, Professor Sophus Bugge has examined in detail the two closely related myths concerning "Odin on the gallows" (*Hóvamöl* 138, 139) and the ash Yggdrasil. He has shown that both myths must have originated from mediæval legends concerning the crucifixion of Christ and the Christian cross, and he has, as I shall try to corroborate in this paper, correctly identified the most important material upon which the myth of the world-tree Yggdrasil is based. But I believe it can be shown that an important link in the chain of evidence is still to be supplied; for, as I believe, the etymology and meaning of the name *Yggdrasil* have not as yet been satisfactorily explained. In the present paper I shall try to show that the name is itself direct, not indirect, evidence of the foreign origin of the myth, and that it is not derived from the myth of "Odin on the gallows."

The myth of the tree Yggdrasil is known to us from the Elder and the Younger Edda. In *Völuspó* 19 the tree is thus described:²

An ash I know, 'tis called Yggdrasil,
The high tree, sprinkled with white water;
Thence come the dews that fall in the valleys,
Forever green it stands o'er the fountain of Urd.³

Compare also *Grimnesmöl* 31:

¹ German translation by BRENNER: *Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen*, München, 1889.

² See GOLTHER, *Germ. Mythologie*, Leipzig, 1895, pp. 527 ff.

³ For the reader's convenience I give the O. N. original for the translated stanzas. The text is Sijmons's, which has not been followed literally:

*Ask veitk standa, heiter Yggdrasels,
hór baðmr ausenn hvíta aure;
þá þan koma duggvar þérs i dala falla,
stendr é of grónn Urðar brunne.*

Three roots run in three directions
 Under the ash Yggdrasill;
 Under the first dwells Hel, under the second the frost giants,
 Under the third the folk of man.¹

Also in *Fjolsvinsmöl* 13 and 14 the tree is thus described:

Svipdagr said:
 Tell me that, Fjolsviðr, which I will ask you
 And do desire to know:
 How is named the tree which spreads abroad
 Its limbs over all lands?
 Fjolsviðr answered:
 Mimi's tree 'tis called; no one knows
 From what roots it springs;
 It shall fall for that, which fewest believe:
 Fire will not fell it, nor iron.²

Other features of the myth from the Elder Edda may be gathered up in a brief paragraph. Mimi's fountain is at the foot of the tree, whence the name "Mimi's tree." In its branches sit an eagle and a hawk, and up and down the tree runs a squirrel called Ratatoskr. Four harts run about in the branches and eat of the leaves. Below a dragon, Níðhoggr, and other worms gnaw on the roots. For other features the reader must be referred to the manuals and to the poems themselves.

In Snorre's Edda (chapter 15) the picture of the world-tree is in its main outlines as follows: The ash Yggdrasill is the greatest and best of all trees. Its branches spread out over the whole world, and its crown reaches heaven. It has three roots: the first of these reaches men (MS. has "the gods," but see Golther, p. 529); the second, the giants; the third, Hell. Under each root is

¹ *Þriar røtr standa á þria vega
 und aske Yggdrasels:
 Hel býr und einne, annare hrtmþursar,
 þriþjo mensker menn.*

² *Svipdagr kvað:*
*Seg[ðu] mér þat, Fjolsviþr, es ek þik fregna mon
 ok ek vilja vita:
 hvat [þat] barr heiter, es breiðask of
 lönd öll limar?*

Fjolsviþr kvað:
*Mímameiþr [hann heiter], en þat mange veit
 hvers hann af rótum rinn;
 vþ þat hann fellr, es fæstan varer:
 feller hann eldr né járn.*

a fountain, Urd's, Mimi's, and the fountain Hvergelmir, respectively. The tree stands in the middle of the earth.

So much for the conception, and now for a consideration of the name and of its relation to the myth of the hanging of Odin, which in *Hǫvumþl* 138 and 139 is as follows:

I know that I hung on the windy tree
 Nine nights throughout,
 Wounded by spear, sacrificed to Odin,
 Myself to myself,
 [On the mighty tree, of which men do not know
 From what roots it springs].
 They offered me no drink nor bread;
 Below my eyes I cast,
 I raised up the runes, weeping I raised them:
 Back thence I fell.¹

According to Bugge's interpretation of the name *Yggdrasil*, the above myth is the cause for its existence: *Yggdrasil* is composed of two words, namely, *Yggr*, "The Terrible One," a name of Odin, and *drasil*, "horse, steed," a word which has no existence outside of Skaldic poetry. *Yggdrasil* must therefore mean "Ygg's horse," "Odin's steed," and it must be a kenning or metaphor employed by the Skalds for the gallows upon which Odin was hung, for "horse" is a common metaphor in English, German, and Scandinavian for "gallows." Even Christ's cross is in a M. E. poem of the fourteenth century described as "Jesus palfraye;" and in another poem (Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood*, E. E. T. S. 46, p. 148) it is said of Jesus that he rode "on stokky stede."

The interpretation of *Yggdrasil* as "Ygg's, Odin's horse" is widely accepted by scholars.² Both Kaufmann³ and Mogk,⁴ who

¹ Veitk at ek hekk vindga meiþe á
 niétr allar nio,
 geire undaþr ok gefenn Óþne,
 sjalfr sjólfum mér,
 [á þeim meiþe, es mange veit
 hvers hann af rótum rinn].
 Við hleife mik sǫddo né við hornage;
 nýsta ek níþr:
 namk upp rúnar, þpande namk;—
 fell ek aþtr þapan.

² As KAUFMANN, *Beitr.*, Vol. XV, p. 204, has noticed, this interpretation had already been given by UHLAND, *Schriften*, Vol. VI, p. 361.

³ "Odin am Galgen," *Beitr.*, Vol. XV, p. 204.

PAUL'S *Grundriss*², Vol. III, p. 335.

are strongly opposed to Bugge and his school, also give their approval to this interpretation.

There are two serious objections against this view of the name and they may be stated as follows:

1. If *Yggdrasill* means "Ygg's horse," then it is not in agreement in form with other kennings of this kind, such as *Mimameiðr*, where the genitive form of *Mimi* is employed; cf. "Signy's husband's cold horse" (*svalan hest Signýjar vers'*), and other kennings in which Odin's name *Yggr* is found: *Yggs at* = "proelium," *Yggjar veðr* = "pugna," *Yggjar bál* = "gladius," and *Yggjar eldr* = "gladius."² In each of these cases of Skaldic metaphors we find the genitive case of *Yggr*, never *Ygg-*, which is explained by Bugge as the form used in composition. He cites a parallel example in the Norw. dial. name for *Daphne Mezereum*: *tyvid* (O. Swed. *tivedh*) and *tysvid* (O. N. **týviðr* and **týsviðr*) stand side by side; but it seems to me to be questionable whether this is a reliable example. An original O. N. **týsviðr* (the god Týr's wood) may have suffered the loss of its -s- because the genitive form in composition with *-viðr* seemed anomalous by the side of the numerous regular compounds in which *-viðr*, *-vid* was the second element: cf. *eldvid*, *furuvid*, *törvid*, etc., etc.; in *Tuesday*, *Tirsdag*, the -s- remains, and there is, so far as I am aware, no by-form without it. Detter³ strongly urges this objection and holds that *Yggdrasill* can only mean "Schreckenspferd," or "Schreckpferd," "Schreckliches Pferd;" cf. *ygga* "metuere" by the side of *ugga*, *yggligr*, *ygglaut* by the side of *uggligr*, *ugglaut*.⁴ Heinzel⁵ also has rejected the usual interpretation. In a review of E. H. Meyer's *Völuspa* he says: "Ebenso ist es unrichtig, dass Yggdrasell den hengst Odhins 'mit hochskaldischem namen' bezeichne. Als kenning kann Yggdrasell nur 'galgen' heissen, nicht, 'galgen Odhins,' oder 'hengst Odhins.'" There is, so far as I can see, no reason why *Yggdrasill* should be considered equivalent to *Yggs (Yggjar) drasill*, *Yggsdrasill*.

¹ *Ynglingasaga*, ed. JÓNSSON, p. 36.

² For these and others see WISÉN, *Carmina Norroena*, Gl. p. 339.

³ *Ark. f. nord. Filologi*, Vol. XIII, pp. 99 and 207.

⁴ Also KAHLE, *IF*. Vol. XIV, p. 180, accepts the view of Detter.

⁵ *Anz. f. d. Altertum*, Vol. XVI, p. 345.

2. The second objection is concerned with the etymology and meaning of the word *drasill*. In Skaldic poetry it is used for "horse, steed," and Bugge supposes that it must originally have been the name of a certain horse in some heroic legend. The substitution of a specific name for a general one is common in Skaldic poetry: "Sleipner of flax-ropes" (*hǫrva Sleipnir*) means "horse of flax-ropes," *i. e.* "the gallows;"¹ any horse may be called "Grani's bride," *Grani* being the name of a certain horse. This kind of kenning can not be old, for it indicates a development in poetics exclusively Skaldic, and *Yggdrasill* can not for the same reason be a popular name drawn from popular belief: it must have originated far out in the Viking age.² As to the etymology of the word *drasill* Bugge³ suggests that it may "perhaps" (*maaske*) be connected with the verb *þrasa*, "to behave in a threatening manner in order to drive another way" (*Lok.* 58), cognate with Latin *terrere*; if *drasill* comes from *þrasa* then *p* must have become *d* by Verner's law (**drasilá-*). It is significant that Bugge further adds: "I do not believe that *Drasill* is related to Goth. *ga-dars*, 'I dare,'" and that he makes mention (although with disapproval) of John Olafsen's conjecture (*Nordens gamle Digtekonst*, p. 83) that *drasill* is borrowed from Latin *dorsuale*. It is clear that no satisfactory explanation of *drasill* has yet been found. There is no other evidence for the existence of a doublet *þras-* : *dras-*, and there is nothing to show that *drasill* really meant "terrifier." Since the meaning of the word has not been known it has been impossible to say whether it is a natural or a far-fetched *heiti* for a certain horse, or whether it is a natural or far-fetched kenning for "horse" in general. It has not been proved that *drasill* is indisputably a Germanic word, although its ending *-ill* apparently conforms to the Norse suffix *-ill* (Germanic *-ila-*).

The above objections against the prevailing view concerning the nature and meaning of the compound *Yggdrasill* are, it seems to me, weighty enough to render it doubtful whether the true solution of the problem has been found. Nor does the more

¹ *Studier*, p. 396; *Ynglingasaga*, ed. JÓNSSON, p. 44.

² *Studier*, p. 398.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 395, footnote.

literal interpretation of Heinzel, Detter, and Kahle sufficiently explain the point, for it leaves out of consideration the etymology and original meaning of the word *drasill*, and these are, as I shall try to show, of the greatest importance.

In order to explain the name *Yggdrasill* it will be necessary to turn to an important mediæval Christian source for the Yggdrasill conception. This has been pointed out by Bugge in his *Studier*, p. 449 ff. This source is represented by a Latin legend¹ of the thirteenth century concerning the origin of the cross, in which it is said that it is really identical with the tree of knowledge. In this legend there is an episode describing Seth's journey to Paradise for the oil of mercy. As I have not seen the Latin text, I have, in the following summary, followed that of Bugge. Adam requests his son Seth to go to Paradise for the oil of mercy, for he is about to die. By the angel who guards the tree of life he is permitted to put his head within the gate. Among other things he sees in the middle of Paradise the clearest fountain, from which run the four rivers Phison, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates, which supply the whole earth with water. Over the fountain he sees a large tree with many branches, but without leaves and bark. He concludes that it is bare on account of his parents' sin. Again Seth looks in; he sees a snake clinging to the tree. He looks in a third time and discovers that the tree has grown up to heaven, and in its top he sees a weeping child in swaddling clothes. He also notices that the root of the tree reaches down to hell, where he recognizes the soul of his brother Abel. The angel tells him that the child is the son of God and the oil of mercy which had been promised to Adam when he was driven from Paradise.

This legend is of the thirteenth century, but it is reasonable to assume that it represents older legends of similar character. Many of its features Bugge points out in other earlier sources. The bareness of the tree, as it is without bark and leaves, is a feature which corresponds to a conception of the tree of knowledge as represented on several early Gallic-Christian grave-monuments,

¹ Latin text in W. MEYER, *Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus*, München, 1881 (*Abhandl. d. k. bayer. Akad. d. Wiss.*).

where two trees stand over against each other, the one covered with leaves, the other dry and almost without leaves;¹ no doubt they represent the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, respectively.

This Latin legend of the origin of the cross is respresented in several European languages, and it was widely distributed in England.² A M.E. version of the story is printed by Morris in his *Legends of the Holy Rood* (E. E. T. S. 46), London, 1871, pp. 18 and 19 ff., in two closely related texts. The first MS is of the thirteenth century and bears the title *þe Holy Rode*; the second is of the fourteenth century and has a more definite title, namely, *Hou þe holy cros was yfounde*. I shall use the former text in the following line-for-line translation and paraphrase of significant portions:

The holy rood, the sweet tree, it is right to have in mind,
That has from strong death brought to life all mankind;
Through a tree we first were lost, and first brought to ground,
And through a tree afterwards brought to life: praised be that hour!
All it came from one root, that brought us to death
And that brought us to life again, through Jesus that us bought.
From the apple-tree that our first father took the vile apple,
In the way that I shall tell you, the sweet rood came.—ll. 1-8.

Then follows the Seth episode substantially as told above on the basis of the Latin original. Seth looks in through the gate of Paradise, and

Amid the place that was so fair he saw a fair well
From which all waters that are on earth come, as the book
doth tell;
Over the well stood a tree, with boughs broad and bare,
But it bore neither leaf nor bark, as if it were very aged,
An adder had clipped it about, all naked without skin:
That was the tree and the adder, which made Adam first do sin.
Again he looked in at the gate; it seemed to him he saw the tree
Fairly covered with leaves and grown up to heaven on high;
A young child he saw up in the tree, in small clothes wound;
The root of the tree, it seemed to him, reached throughout the
bottom of hell.
The angel drove him from the gate, etc.—ll. 71-82.

¹ *Studier*, p. 459.

² *Ibid.*, p. 449.

The angel now explains the meaning of the oil of mercy, and the poem thus continues:

The angel turned to that tree, an apple therefrom he took,
And gave Seth thereof three seeds, when he came to him,
And bade him lay these seeds under his father's tongue,
And bury him when he was dead, and look what thereof sprung.

—II. 87-90.

The rest of the poem is concerned with the history of the three wands which spring up from Adam's grave, and which finally become one tree. Moses, David, Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba are brought into connection with it, and when Jesus is about to be crucified the Jews find it and make it into the cross.

In the legend the barkless and leafless tree of knowledge becomes in the next moment the tree of life and, in the course of time, the Christian cross. The Christian cross is a world-tree in that it bore on itself the sins of the world through Christ's death for the whole world. Numerous early Christian authors found traces of the cross everywhere in nature.¹ When birds spread out their wings their form is that of a cross. The first man and woman were created in the form of a cross. Even the world is in the form of the cross.

So also the Norse ash-tree *Yggdrasill* is a symbol of the world. The myth is a fine example of that poetic process through which foreign and strange elements have been almost perfectly assimilated and recreated. The poets have made it so much their own that for centuries men have believed it to be an independent and original creation of the Germanic or Norse imagination.

The second element of the name *Yggdrasill* is, in my opinion, partly derived from the Latin adjective *rāsilis*, "polished, smooth, bare." In Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, 17, 23 (35), an old vine is described as *rāsilis*, "deprived of bark" (*draconem . . . palmitem . . . rasilem*), and in Prud., *στέφ.* 3, 69, is found *scopuli rasiles*, "smooth rocks," that is, "deprived of herbage, bare" (cf. Andrews, *Lat. Dict.*, for both references). The epithet *rāsilis* must have been used in the Latin legend or poem from which some Norseman borrowed the conception of a world-tree. It corresponds with exactness to the

¹ See MORRIS, *Legends of the Holy Rood*, p. xxx (The Analogy of the Cross in Nature).

description of the tree of knowledge in the Latin legend summarized by Bugge and in the M. E. poem from which passages have been translated above:

*Ouer þe welle stod a tre, with bowes brode and lere
Ac it ne bar noþer lef ne rynde, as it uorolded were.*—ll. 73 f.

The tree was bare, barkless, and leafless, that is, it was—to describe it by means of a Latin adjective—*rāsilis*.¹

But in order to account for the initial *d* in *drasil* we must now consider the first element of the name. This must originally have been *yggt*, the neuter form of the adjective which is used as a proper name in *Yggr*, “The Terrible One.” The form *yggt* occurs once in the Elder Edda, namely in *Atlamöl* 1, 6:

*yggt vas ðeim síðan
ok et sama sonom Gjuka,
es vǫro sannráðner.*²

“Terrible it was for them later, and the same (namely *yggt*) for the sons of Gjuki who were grievously betrayed.”

It was long supposed that the MS had *ygr*, with an *r* substituted for a partially erased *t*, but Wimmer and Jónsson³ have

¹Since the above was in type I have been able to consult MEYER'S monograph, *Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus (Abhandl. d. k. bayer. Akad. d. Wiss., Vol. XVI, 2, pp. 101-66)*, which contains the text of the Latin legend on the history of the Christian cross. To an editor of this JOURNAL I had already expressed the opinion that the word *rasilis* was probably not used in this particular version, for if it had been used here, its similarity to the second element of *Yggdrasil* would no doubt have been noticed by Bugge who has studied the legend in connection with the *Yggdrasil* myth. I here give a few lines from that part of the legend which concerns the present matter, a few variant readings being given in the parentheses: (p. 135) *super ipsum uero fontem quaedam (magna V) arbor stabat nimis ramosa, sed foliis et cortice nudata. meditari ipse cepit, quare arbor illa ita nudata esset . . . cepit meditari arborem illam esse nudatam propter peccata eorum . . . intuitus est serpentem (magnum V) circa arborem nudatam inuolutatum . . .* (p. 136) *vidit arborem iam dictam usque ad celos eleuatam . . . vidit radicem (draconem A) eiusdem arboris terram penetrantem usque in infernum pertingere . . .* (p. 137) *dedit ei angelus tria grana pomi (arboris add. V) illius de quo (qua V) manducauerat pater eius . . .* With *palmes rasilis, scopuli rasilis*, cited above, compare also *nudum nemus, loca nuda gignentium, nudata cacumina silvae* (Andrews); hence it is correct to assume the equation *nudus, nudatus = rasilis*.

Another note may here be added. For the connection of the cross with the tree of knowledge, cf. GERVASIUS VON TILBURY, *Otia Imperialia* (1212): *Sed et alii dicunt, Adam de Paradiso tulisse pomum vel surculum ligni vetiti, ex cuius semente fuit crux*; and, further on, *Traditio Graecorum habet, quod de arbore illa, in cuius fructu peccauit Adam, ramus fuit translatus in Jerusalem, qui in tantam excreuit arborem, quod de illo facta est crux domini* (Meyer, p. 118).

²Cf. JÓNSSON, *Eddalieder*, Vol. II, p. 82. In his text Jónsson has the emendation *uggr* instead of *yggt* as above (MS *yggt*), presumably because he was then under the impression that the MS had *ygr*. So BUGGE, *Nor. Fornkv.*, p. 292, who prints *ygr* in his text.

³*Haandskriftet No. 2365*, etc. (*Codex Regius*), Kjöbenhavn, 1891, p. 81, l. 11, and p. 182.

decided that *r* has been erased and *t* substituted. In his new edition of the *Heldenlieder* (1902) Sijmons has adopted the form *yggt*,¹ which will presumably be allowed to stand hereafter as the correct reading. The original name of the tree was therefore **yggt rasilis*, **yggtrasilis*, which, however, could only be spoken as **ygg-trasilis*, since the *t* must necessarily range itself phonetically with the second syllable. A *-t-* in such a position, and thus beyond etymological control (as the sign of the neuter gender of *ygg*), could easily and naturally between the long voiced stop *gg* and the sonorous *r* become voiced to a *-d-*. This process was no doubt favored by the fact that the second element was not understood and could not be kept free from the *t* (*d*). I have marked the vowel *ā* in *rāsilis* as long, but it is by no means certain that the Norseman who first created the name **yggtrasilis* so pronounced it, but if he actually did so, nothing would be more natural than a shortening under a secondary accent. Syncope of the last *i* must also be assumed as an early stage in the history of the name; thus, **yggt rasilis* > **yggtrasilis* > **yggdrasilis* > *yggdrasils*; it is of course immaterial whether the syncope of *i* is later or earlier than the change of *t* to *d*.

Having identified the two elements of the name it now remains to explain why *yggt* was coupled with *rāsilis*, a native with a Latin word. We must again refer to the vision of Seth in Paradise. The tree which Seth saw was in reality an apple-tree, and it was from this tree that Adam took the vile apple:

Of þe apeltre² þat our uerste fader þen luper appel nom,

In þe manere þat ichulle you telle, þe swete rode com.—ll. 7 f.

I cannot believe that the conception of the tree of knowledge as an apple-tree occurs here for the first time. It is such a natural inference from the story of the fall of Adam and Eve that it may be supposed to be much older than the thirteenth century.

¹ See also GERING, *Glossar z. d. Lied. d. Edda*, 2. Aufl., 1896, p. 202. He is uncertain whether to assume a form *ýgt* or *yggt*, neut. of *ýgr* or *ygg*.

² The later MS (Vernon), MORRIS, p. 19, has *tree*; so also the Harl. MS 2277. Also in the O.N. version of the same legend (*Heilagra Manna Sögur*, ed. UNGER, Chra., 1877, Vol. I, p. 299) the tree is called an appletree: *Enn ifr keldunni sá hann apalldr einn standa með mǫrgum greinum ok þó barklausan. . . . Enn þá er hann veik aptr, þá sá hann fyrrnefndan apalldr upvaxinn til himna*, etc. But *apalldr* is sometimes used for "tree" in general as well as for "apple-tree."

I therefore make the surely not unreasonable conjecture that the legend or poem from which a Norseman borrowed his conception of the world-tree described the tree of knowledge as a *mālus rāsilis*, "a bare, leafless, and barkless apple-tree," as in the M. E. version cited above. The Norseman who was confronted by this expression probably did not understand *rāsilis* at all, but he may have thought that he understood *mālus*, which he identified with the Latin adjective *mālus*,¹ an epithet fitting enough as long as the tree is considered as the tree of knowledge or as the instrument of a terrible death. He must have thought that *rāsilis* was a noun and a specific name of the tree, and since he could not translate it he adopted it in its original form. He has treated it as a neuter noun perhaps on the analogy of O.N. *tré*, *n.* (cf. also Lat. *lignum*, *n.*, common in early Christian literature for the cross). The Latin *mālus* has such a wide range of meaning that it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, to say what shade of meaning he saw in it. This meaning would no doubt be dependent on the context in which *mālus rāsilis* occurred. Perhaps a meaning "evil, terrible, awful," will not be far wide of the mark (cf. *yggt* in the *Atlamoł* passage above). It would therefore not seem unfitting to translate *malus rasilis* as "The Terrible (Gallows-) Tree, The Awful Gallows;" cf. English *bitter cross*, *cursed cross*, and Lat. *mala crux*, which is of frequent occurrence in Plautus and Terence: *i (abi) in malam crucem* "go and be hanged;" *dignus fuit, qui malo cruce* (masc.) *periret*, Enn. *ann.* 261 (Georges).²

It now remains to discuss the origin of the nominative form *drasil*. Since the Christian world-tree was in the North conceived of as an ash, the name was usually found in the collocation *askr Yggdrasils*. Only once, namely in *Völuspó* 19, 1, does the name *Yggdrasil* appear independently of *askr*. This stanza is recorded in five MSS.: three of them have *ygdrasil*, one *ygdrasil*, and one *ygdrasils*. Bugge and most editors have

¹ If he could confuse *mālus* with *mālus*, could he not also read *rāsilis* as *rāsilis*?

² The question as to whether there is in Norse sources any trace of the conception of the tree of knowledge as leafless and barkless (*rāsilis*) is answered in the affirmative by Bugge, *Studier*, p. 458. In *Grimnesmål* 35, 2, it is said of the tree that "it rots on the side (*á hlípo fúnar*)."² The connection is a very probable one; the dragon *Nidhoggr* which gnaws on the tree from below is probably also, with Bugge, the dragon of Seth's vision.

followed the majority reading. Sijmons has adopted the reading *Yggdrasels*, presumably on the assumption that *askr* is to be supplied mentally: *Ask veitk standa heiter Yggdrasels* (sc. *askr*).¹ The frequency of the formula *askr Yggdrasils* naturally led to the assumption that *-drasils* was the genitive form: cf. *allt rikit Italielands*, *Rómaborgar ríki*, *fiskr þjóðvitnis*, *Fenris úlfr*, which are parallel examples to *arbor fici*, *urbs Antiochiae*, etc.² The inference that *-drasils* was the genitive form could also easily be drawn from the fact that the word seemed to contain the common Norse suffix *-ill* (Gmc. *-ila-*). Thus a nominative form *-drasill* was obtained through an analogical process which does not differ in principle from that which accounts for the singular *Chinee* from *Chinese*, *Portuguee* from *Portuguese*, *shay* from *chaise*, *pea* from *O. E. pios-an*.

In the light of the foregoing the reading *heiter Yggdrasils* may reasonably be considered a relic from a time when the tree was actually called *Yggdrasils* (**yggdrasilis*), and before the form *drasill* had been obtained in the manner that has been indicated.

Now, since the name *Yggdrasill* meant "cross, gallows" (cf. Goth. *galga Xristaus*; O. E. *gealga*, O. N. *galgi*, also used of the Christian cross), and since the second element could not be understood and identified with a native word, it would be natural for the Skaldic poets to regard it as a kenning for "gallows;" and since "horse" was a very frequent kenning for "gallows,"³ the conclusion was easily and naturally reached that *drasill* must be a kenning for "horse." Hence the poetic word *drasill*, "horse," found nowhere except in Skaldic poetry, and leaving no trace of itself in popular speech.

The name *Yggdrasill* is therefore not originally drawn from the story of the hanging of Odin as described in the *Höfvamöl*.

¹ MAGNÜSSON, *Odin's Horse Yggdrasill*, London, 1895, p. 5 *et passim* interprets *askr Yggdrasils* as "the ash of Odin's horse," "the ash of Sleipner," which is the horse of Odin. *Yggdrasill* is, therefore, not the name of the tree, but simply a kenning for the eight-footed Sleipner, which is symbolic of the winds that blow among the branches of the world-tree. MOGK, *Mythologie, P. Gr.*, Vol. III, p. 335, approves of this interpretation.

² DETTER, *Ark. f. nord. Filologi*, Vol. XIII, p. 205.

³ One or two examples from English may here be added: "to mount the wooden horse" = "to be hanged on the gallows;" "You'll ride on a horse that was foaled of an acorn. That is the gallows" (cf. *N. E. D.*).

On the contrary it is even possible that the name which meant "gallows" and which might seem to contain the name *Yggr*, "Odin," may be the cause for the transference of the story of Christ's crucifixion to Odin.¹ Proper names are most prolific myth-makers. The mythological dictionaries and manuals are full of references to this very common process, and it is unnecessary to cite examples. It is, of course, possible that the crucifixion story may have been transferred to Odin for some other reason. For the present, however, I prefer to leave this matter in abeyance.

In the name *Yggdrasill* there lies, as I believe, a definite answer to the question whether Norse mythology has been materially influenced by Christian conceptions and legends, and also a proof that Bugge's point of view and method are correct. It gives us some insight into the method and material of Skaldic poetry and into the cultural relations of Norway with the outside world in the Viking Age. All the sources of Norse mythology and heroic legends must be carefully studied in order that the native and foreign elements may be distinguished from each other, and in order that we may correctly understand the nature of Scandinavian culture in this period. Professor Bugge's epoch-making studies in northern mythological and heroic legends have already accomplished so much in this direction that the present contribution, if it receive the approval of scholars, will seem only a slight one. If my results be correct, then I have found the truth in this particular case only because I have long recognized the importance of Bugge's great work.²

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¹ MAGNÜSSON, *Odin's Horse*, p. 41, explains the origin of the myth of Odin's hanging as due to the "false reading" *heiter Yggdrasill* (*Vsp.* 19, 1) for *heiter Yggdrasils*. See also p. 21, footnote.

² This paper was already completed before *Indogermanische Forschungen*, Vol. XIV (1903), came to hand. This volume contains an article by KAHLE, "Altwestnordische Namenstudien," and one by NOREEN, "Suffix-Ablaut im Altnordischen," and in both articles reference is made to the declension of *drasill*, which shows an *o* in dat. sg., *drøsti*; gen. pl. and acc., *drøsla*; dat. *drøstum*. Kahle, p. 157, compares *ferill*: *fprull*, *bitill*: *bitull*, *gengill*: *gongull*, but also considers it possible, with Bugge, that *o* is due to the analogy of the dat. plural. Noreen, p. 396, would set up the rule that *-il*: *-ul* was so distributed that the former stood in the unsynopated cases, the latter in the synopated ones. It cannot be shown even on this basis that *drasill* is a Germanic word: its declension would naturally follow the analogy of other nouns ending in *-ill*.